

Although BellSouth does not serve me, other companies do (Verizon, Quest, SBC). I get my Internet DSL access through a small, independent Internet Service Provider, which is only possible because they are able to compete using the infrastructure created over the past 100 years by publicly regulated telephone utilities.

Small providers built the Internet - I was using Internet Newsgroups starting at 300 baud, while the local telephone company was still focused on the profits it would make if the world was full of local Bulletin Board Systems and everyone had to make many long distance direct dial phone calls using acoustic couplers, to reach them.

I remember seeing articles about the expected profits to be made charging long distance for 300 baud calls to Bulletin Board numbers at the other end of the country.

Meanwhile small innovators were creating store-and-forward systems like FIDOnet for home computers and the Internet for large computers.

I ask that you continue the present system so that the independent providers who are now able to use the existing copper wire -- which, at least from the pole over to my house, has literally not changed since 1923 when it was installed -- which now carries DSL.

Bandwidth on copper is expected to increase. This makes room for more companies like my ISP, Sonic.net, to serve customers competitively.

Everyone paid for the system that's in place now. Changing the rules so only one company controls everything after it's been built is not wise and should not be done.

Approving BellSouth's request or any similar request would have a bad effect on customers like me who prefer to have a choice and can find a local provider that offers services and options not allowed by the big phone company that currently owns the distribution system.